

Harris Neck

National Wildlife Refuge

photo: Garland Pardue



photo: USFWS



photo: Jim Barber



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Refuge Facts

- Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge is part of the Savannah Coastal Refuges (SCR) complex which is headquartered in Savannah, Georgia.
- The complex is comprised of seven national wildlife refuges, totalling 55,942 acres, found along a 100-mile stretch of coastline in Georgia and South Carolina. The seven refuges are Pinckney Island and Tybee Refuges in South Carolina; Savannah (located in both states along the Savannah River), and Wassaw, Harris Neck, Blackbeard Island, and Wolf Island Refuges in Georgia.
- Established: 1962.
- Acres: 2,824 (157 man-made fresh water ponds; 705 open fields; 663 pine/oak forests; two acres of forested wetland; and 1,297 salt marsh).
- Harris Neck is one of 18 sites forming the Colonial Coast Birding Trail, inaugurated in 2000. The site was chosen for its accessibility and bird diversity.
- Location: McIntosh County, GA, 5 miles north of Eulonia, GA, then seven miles east on Harris Neck Road.

Natural History

- Land grant ownership to Scottish settlers in 1750.
- Settled by freed slaves after Civil War.
- Lands condemned; used as World War II army air training base.
- Ownership given to McIntosh County after World War II.
- County ownership revoked, established as wildlife refuge.
- Notable concentrations of waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, songbirds, raptors, deer, turkey, quail and alligators.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- 45,000 visitors annually.
- FY 05 budget: \$477,000.
- Staff: eight.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide habitat and protection for migratory birds.
- Provide protection and habitat to promote resident and migratory wildlife diversity.
- Provide protection and management for endangered and threatened plant and animal species (American bald eagle, American alligator and wood stork).
- Provide wildlife education and interpretation and recreational opportunities to the visiting public.
- Provide protection and management necessary to sustain and promote colonial nesting bird populations that use the refuge.

Management Tools

- Water level management for waterfowl, shorebirds, wood storks and wading birds.
- Mowing and disking.
- Prescribed fire.
- Mechanical and chemical control of noxious plants.
- Timber cutting.
- Public hunting for deer management.
- Education/interpretation.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships.

Public Use Opportunities

- Hiking/biking/trails.

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- Auto tour route.
- Wildlife observation.
- Wildlife photography.
- Hunting.
- Fishing/shrimping/crabbing.
- Environmental education and interpretation.

impoundments that are managed for wading birds and endangered wood storks that are not open to fishing. However, the refuge has two public boat ramps and two fishing piers that provide public access and opportunities for saltwater fishing.

Calendar of Events

May: Migratory Bird Day.

July: Butterfly survey.

September: Non-quota archery deer/hog hunting.

October: National Wildlife Refuge Week, Colonial Coast Birding & Nature Festival.

November: Quota deer/hog gun hunt.

December: Christmas Bird Count.

Questions and Answers

How do I get to the refuge?

Harris Neck Refuge is located seven miles east of Interstate 95 off of Exit 67, (South Newport).

When is the refuge open?

The refuge is open to the general public during daylight hours seven days a week.

Where and when are my best chances of seeing a painted bunting?

Painted buntings are typically present on the refuge from late April until late September. Birds can usually be observed while touring the refuge's four-mile wildlife drive.

Does the refuge allow any hunting?

Hunting is permitted on the refuge for deer and feral hogs. A three-day non-quota archery hunt is typically held during September and a one-day quota shotgun (slugs only) hunt is held during November. Hunting applications can be obtained at the Harris Neck Refuge or by calling the Savannah Coastal Refuges office at 912/652 4415.

Is fishing permitted on the refuge?

The refuge has six freshwater